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The last of a series of teacher education units discusses techniques for teaching reading and writing to culturally disadvantaged students. The poor reading ability of such students is related to their cultural backgrounds which prepared them inadequately for reading instruction in a middle-class oriented curriculum. Therefore, remedial instruction must supply some of this preparatory experience. Pupils ought to be able to hear and speak the language before they are taught to read. Reading lessons should include the components of motivation, vocabulary, guided silent reading, discussion, oral rereading, and follow-up. Writing is the most difficult language skill to teach these students, so instruction should progress from speaking to reading and writing. A summary, some discussion questions, and a bibliography are included. For other units in this series see UD 005 366, UD 005 367, UD 006 843, UD 006 842, UD 007 191, and UD 006 841. (NH)

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**Unit Eight**
**May 1, 1967**

**Improving the Reading and Writing Skills of the Culturally Disadvantaged**

UD 005 472

**ONE-YEAR**

**SCHOOLWIDE PROJECT**

**GRADES K-12**

**By Kenneth R. Johnson**

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**Science Research Associates, Inc., 259 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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# TEACHING CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

(Grades K-12)

by

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## UNIT VIII: Improving the Reading and Writing Skills Of Culturally Disadvantaged Students

(May 1, 1967)

Eighth of Eight-Unit Series Appearing First of Each Month
From October 1, 1966, Through May 1, 1967

UD 005 472

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## PREFACE

One of the foremost challenges in American education today is that of educating the culturally disadvantaged pupils. To help them achieve in school, it is necessary for educators to understand them and their problems. This SRA extension service, Teaching Culturally Disadvantaged Pupils, for grades K to 12, is specifically designed to help teachers understand the culturally disadvantaged, to offer suggestions and techniques for teaching the culturally disadvantaged, to stimulate thought and promote discussion among teachers of the culturally disadvantaged, and to serve as a guide to the really valuable writing and research on the problem. For several years, SRA extension services have been used by thousands of educators as a framework and background resources for monthly in-service meetings, emphasizing study of problems related to classroom teaching.

This series, Teaching Culturally Disadvantaged Pupils, is being offered for the first time in 1966-67. Each monthly unit deals in a concise, nontechnical manner with one phase of the subject. While this extension service is primarily designed for use in in-service education meetings, its comprehensive coverage and many practical suggestions for regular classroom teaching can also be valuable for private study by individual educators.

The following units are included in this series for 1966-67:

UNIT ONE: The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil--Part I (October)
UNIT TWO: The Culturally Disadvantaged Pupil--Part II (November)
UNIT THREE: The Culturally Disadvantaged Negro Student (December)
UNIT FOUR: Other Culturally Disadvantaged Groups (January)
UNIT FIVE: Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged Student--Part I (February)
UNIT SIX: Teaching the Culturally Disadvantaged Student--Part II (March)
UNIT SEVEN: Improving Language Skills of the Culturally Disadvantaged (April)
UNIT EIGHT: Improving the Reading and Writing Skills of Culturally Disadvantaged Students (May)

The author of this series is Mr. Kenneth R. Johnson, Consultant, Division of Secondary Education, Los Angeles City School Districts, Los Angeles, California. For the past year he has specialized in the problem of educating the culturally disadvantaged, particularly the problems of teaching language and reading. He has conducted numerous institutes and lectures on the disadvantaged student at teacher workshops, conferences, and the colleges and universities in the Los Angeles area.

Born in a disadvantaged area of Chicago, the author worked in the post office for five years and served two years in the army before attending college at Wilson Junior College, Chicago Teachers College, and the University of Chicago (B.A., M.A.). He has done graduate work at San Jose State

College, and is currently enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Southern California. All of his teaching experience has been in schools that had culturally disadvantaged populations.

We urge the school administrator or other educator receiving this extension service on Teaching Culturally Disadvantaged Pupils to assign to some one interested and competent person or committee in your school the responsibility for making the best use of each unit.

The booklets in this extension service will arrive about the first of each month, October through May. This issue contains Unit Eight. We hope it will provide valuable help and practical information to those involved in education.

Dorothy Ericson
Project Editor

Paul T. Kosiak, Director
SRA Educational Services

May 1967

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# UNIT EIGHT: IMPROVING THE READING AND WRITING SKILLS OF CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

## PART I: INTRODUCTION

The question "How can culturally disadvantaged pupils be taught to read?" is frequently asked as if there is one method of teaching reading that is an answer to the question. Actually, there is no one method to teach culturally disadvantaged pupils or any pupils to read. Children who have all the prerequisites for reading--in other words, children who are ready--learn to read regardless of the method used to teach reading. The reason that many culturally disadvantaged pupils are poor readers is that they lack the prerequisites to become good readers in the present school curriculum. No matter which method is used for teaching reading many culturally disadvantaged pupils will fail to become good readers because they aren't ready--they aren't ready when they start school, and most aren't ready after they start school, and most aren't ready any time during their school careers. The achievement gap between them and their middle-class peers at the time of entering school increasingly widens as time and grade level progress. The failure of remedial reading programs to close the gap--or, at least, to keep the gap from widening--should indicate to educators that low achievement in reading of culturally disadvantaged pupils is not simply the result of methods used to teach reading; yet, educators keep trying to find that one method, and they keep devising remedial reading programs intended to teach culturally disadvantaged pupils to read. The persistence to devise more and more remedial reading programs for culturally disadvantaged pupils is probably a result of educators confusing nonachievement because of cultural deprivation and nonachievement because of limited innate mental capacity. In other words, it's the confusion between slow learners and culturally disadvantaged learners that was pointed out in Unit Six--educators act as if one effect, nonachievement, is due to only one cause. Slow learners and culturally disadvantaged learners are not the same kind of learner, even though they both may be poor readers.

Reading is a complicated process that is difficult to define. But a definition of reading is necessary because it points out the reasons so many culturally disadvantaged fail to become good readers. Reading can be defined as the symbolic use of language where one obtains meaning from printed symbols. The ability to attach meaning to these printed symbols involves previous learning of oral language which in turn stands for real objects. This grows out of the totality of language experiences of the child. All

previous experience that increases a child's understanding of the world is involved in this complicated code of learning.[1]

Now, if the main points in this definition are related to the total description of the culturally disadvantaged pupil the reasons for poor achievement in reading are apparent. The preceding seven units have presented, in detail, a description of culturally disadvantaged pupils. At this point, it is only necessary to contrast the definition of reading with a brief general description of culturally disadvantaged pupils to illustrate how the definition implies their failure.

First of all, reading is a symbolic process and culturally disadvantaged pupils generally do not handle well the kinds of symbols that are necessary for learning reading in the middle-class oriented curriculum. Many culturally disadvantaged pupils speak nonstandard varieties of English or different languages (English may be their second language). It is obvious that one should be able to speak the variety of English he will be taught to read--or, at least, to be able to hear the sounds of the variety of English he will be taught to read. Many culturally disadvantaged pupils can do neither. Part of their language handicap is due to the nonstandard varieties they speak, and part of it is due to the lack of concepts that generate a vocabulary for learning to read. And this points out a second implication of their failure: culturally disadvantaged pupils have not had the expected experiences that yield the necessary concepts for learning to read, or the expected experiences that teachers can build on to help pupils develop necessary concepts--and subsequently language skills--for learning to read. Their cultural background has not prepared them for reading: that is, the kind of preparation for learning to read that middle-class pupils receive almost automatically in their culture is not a part of the culture of deprivation. Pupils from the latter culture are programed for failure in reading. And because reading is so important for achievement in other subjects, disadvantaged pupils become multiple failures. Finally, the learning style of culturally disadvantaged pupils, their lack of literacy as a tradition, the inappropriateness of most reading materials and their anti-intellectualism are negative factors that contribute to their poor achievement in reading. The reason remedial reading programs generally fail to help disadvantaged pupils close the reading achievement gap (thus, the whole achievement gap) between them and their middle-class peers is: the school does not base the reading program on the experiences of culturally disadvantaged pupils. The school must realize that programs in reading must be conducted concurrently with remedial programs in language (remedial language programs that are based on the interferences of a particular linguistic group), programs in helping disadvantaged pupils acquire experiences to build additional concepts (compensatory education), and programs to help disadvantaged pupils develop a mature learning style (verbally oriented, efficient, nonphysical, increase in attention span, etc.)--that is, if the school will not change the curriculum to fit culturally disadvantaged pupils. This is quite a job, and it is doubtful that many culturally disadvantaged pupils will be good readers

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[1]Herman Warsh, "Teaching Culturally Deprived Children to Read" (unpublished paper, University of Southern California, 1965).

even if the schools do take all these various steps (some school systems actually do!). Too many of the causes of deprivation--and these are the same causes of nonachievement in reading and other subjects--are beyond the influence of the school. This question will be returned to at the end of Part II and another rationale on which to base reading programs for disadvantaged pupils will be suggested. This unit will also suggest specific techniques for teaching particular reading skills to culturally disadvantaged pupils. These techniques are covered in Part II. Suggestions for teaching writing are covered in Part III.

## PART II: TEACHING READING TO CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

### The Reading Lesson

The reading lesson can be roughly divided into six parts: (1) motivation, (2) vocabulary, (3) guided silent reading, (4) discussion, (5) oral rereading, (6) skill development and follow-up (independent activities). Because reading is so important, it should be taught every day. In addition, reading skills should be reinforced and extended in other subjects. Reading and the other language arts are the keys to academic success, and they can't be overemphasized. In the upper grades, an entire reading lesson (a lesson including the six parts listed above) can't be completed during the time allotted for the reading period. Reading lessons in upper grades should be divided into two parts with the break coming at the end of one of the parts.

The first part of the reading lesson--motivation--is a crucial one in teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged pupils. The problem of motivating culturally disadvantaged pupils is not segmented into individual motivation attempts preceding each reading assignment; rather, the problem of motivating culturally disadvantaged pupils is an overall problem. That is, these pupils must be helped to develop positive attitudes that make them want to achieve. Of course, this is easy to point out--but so difficult to accomplish. The problem is all tied up in the whole package of deprivation that is discussed in this series. The point is, culturally disadvantaged pupils must want to generally achieve, and their general propensity for achievement involves improving self-concept, generating a success cycle, seeing practical and immediate application of school learning, having a curriculum suited to their needs and interests, etc. This general motivation for achievement is necessary before culturally disadvantaged pupils can be motivated for a particular reading lesson. If they are not motivated in this general way, then motivation for particular lessons in reading, or lessons in other subjects, becomes individual, segmented uncoordinated efforts by the teacher for motivating pupils; instead, motivating pupils before reading lessons or lessons in other subjects should be a continuing and reinforcing effort that sustains general motivation for achievement. This point must be made because it is doubtful whether culturally disadvantaged pupils can be motivated for each reading lesson if they have not developed this <u>general</u> motivation. Thus, the motivation that should precede each reading lesson is in perspective.

Part of the motivation problem in reading is due to the inappropriateness of reading materials for culturally disadvantaged pupils. In summary, many reading materials include characters that are unlike any people the pupils know, the characters go through strange actions in unfamiliar settings, and to top it all off they are speaking an almost incomprehensible language. In other words, the prospect of reading these materials doesn't generate much motivation in culturally disadvantaged pupils. Fortunately, publishers

are making efforts to produce reading materials that are appealing to disadvantaged pupils. Motivating disadvantaged pupils to read will be a little easier--but still painfully difficult--as these materials increase.

In the meantime, however, teachers have to work with the materials that are available. And the problem is more difficult as age and grade level increases, and as the reading material increases in difficulty. In other words, reading material becomes more and more inappropriate as the need to read becomes more and more important. So--the question is, how can these available materials be made attractive to culturally disadvantaged pupils? In motivating culturally disadvantaged pupils to read particular materials, teachers must relate the problem of a story or the information in a reading selection to the interests, needs, and understandings of disadvantaged pupils. This requires a great deal of stretching sometimes, and a great deal of understanding culturally disadvantaged pupils all the time. In order to motivate pupils to read a story, teachers have to pick out aspects of the reading material to discuss that are relevant to the experience of disadvantaged pupils. Usually, the problem or conflict of the story is universal and cuts across cultural boundaries. The trick is to structure the discussion of the problem or conflict to fit the experiences of the pupils. If the teacher does not understand the pupils, the trick cannot come off well. Understandably, the better the story the easier it is to relate the problem or conflict to the experience of the pupils. Put another way, good literature has a universality that transcends cultural boundaries. On the other hand, the reading level of good literature is usually more difficult. Still, it is easier to motivate disadvantaged pupils to read good literature than it is to motivate them to read the usual kinds of stories found in reading textbooks. This, too, is understandable: pupils with the monumental problems of deprivation can't be aroused to read about storybook characters who grapple with such "problems" as finding food for a pet rabbit or trying to find a way of asking the new girl to have a soda or any of the other relatively bland conflicts and crises that are common to stories in reading textbooks. Culturally disadvantaged pupils can hardly be motivated to read this kind of "literature." The trick of relating many stories commonly found in reading textbooks to the experiences of culturally disadvantaged pupils just can't be carried off.

Introducing the new vocabulary is the second part of the reading lesson. The problem here is that <u>much</u> of the vocabulary of stories is either new to culturally disadvantaged pupils or they have just a casual lexical acquaintance with it. Reading textbooks list new words to be introduced in a story. Teachers must go over the story, however, and pick out those words disadvantaged pupils do not have in their speaking or hearing vocabularies even though these words are not listed as "new words." Thus, the language handicap of disadvantaged pupils requires them to handle more "new words" than their more fortunate middle-class peers for whom the books are written. And disadvantaged pupils are least able to handle more new words. This fact, alone, indicates a need for textbooks that are designed to account for their peculiar status of deprivation.

Before reading, all unfamiliar words should be introduced <u>in sentences</u>. Sentences containing the words can be written on the chalkboard or reproduced

on pupil "worksheets." The new words should be underlined and the structural and phonetic clues discussed (specific techniques for teaching these clues are discussed below). Also, pupils should be asked to give a synonym from their speaking vocabulary for every new word (a slang word should be accepted--this may be the only synonym disadvantaged pupils have).

It must be pointed out that pupils should be able to "hear" the new words; that is, they should be able to hear all the phonetic elements in the new words. Part of the difficulty for disadvantaged pupils during the vocabulary part of a reading lesson is that the pupils neither have the words in their speaking and hearing vocabularies, nor can they hear the phonetic elements in the word. If the word is part of their speaking and hearing vocabulary, they often give the words a nonstandard pronunciation that interferes with their ability to learn to read the word. Again, the need for the kind of oral language instruction discussed in Unit Seven is recommended. Further, this oral language instruction should precede formal reading instruction in the lower grades, and be conducted concurrently and coordinated with the reading program for culturally disadvantaged pupils.

After new words have been introduced, the teacher should help the pupils get started reading the story. The teacher can do this by reading the first few paragraphs to the pupils. Or the teacher can have students read one or two paragraphs to answer specific questions or obtain specific information to briefly discuss.

After pupils have been helped to start reading the story, they can continue on their own. Reading on their own should be purposeful. That is, pupils should read the story to find out specific information or answer specific questions, perhaps those questions raised during the motivation period. Obviously, pupils should realize what the purpose is for reading the story before they read the story--otherwise, they won't know what to look for in the story. Too often, teachers assign questions at the end of reading the story or they tell the pupils the purpose for reading the story after the pupils have read it. This is not only inefficient, but it does not focus the pupils' attention on the story because they can't interact--carry on a dialogue--with the story unless they have a purpose. Finally, the purpose for reading the story should tie in with the experience and interests of the pupils. In other words, the purpose for reading a story should be inherently motivating. Particular reading skills that can be reinforced during guided reading are comprehension, word recognition and vocabulary expansion, phonetic and structural analysis, reference and organizational skills.

During this guided reading period, the teacher should circulate around the classroom and help any pupils who have difficulty--or, if the reading group is small enough, the teacher can be conveniently seated to give help. The point is, the guided reading part of a reading lesson should be exactly that--guided. Teachers should not really leave the pupils "on their own in reading."

After guided reading is completed, the teacher should conduct a discussion to determine if the purpose for reading the story has been satisfied. Also, the story can be interpreted during the discussion period. This part

of the reading lesson can be the most enjoyable and profitable, because pupils get an opportunity to react. And they can react in a number of ways. First of all, pupils have an opportunity to organize and express their ideas and extend language skills. Secondly, reading and discussion of reading is the one area of the curriculum that makes the pupils' experience an integral and functional part of the curriculum. Story characters and theme are meaningful through the experience of the pupil. Out of this meaning, pupils can extract understanding of themselves and others. This, of course, depends on how effective the teacher has structured motivation and guided reading parts of the reading lesson.

A good time to orally reread parts of the story is during the discussion and interpretation part of the reading lesson. Pupils can orally read parts to answer questions, prove a point, support a particular interpretation, or just for enjoyment. It is doubtful if rereading the entire story orally is helpful, especially at the upper grades. For one thing, it's a slow process. In addition, many culturally disadvantaged pupils are poor readers and they have difficulty following another poor reader, while good readers are bored. Finally, extended oral reading by poor readers probably reinforces the reading faults of other poor readers. Thus, oral reading should be limited to reading short passages for a particular reason. Other reasons for oral rereading are to convey meaning through the use of proper expression, to practice standard pronunciation, and to gain confidence in reading.

The sixth part of the reading lesson is the follow-up. This is the "workbook" section of the reading lesson. Generally, teachers use the workbooks that accompany the reading text. Most of these workbooks are very good. Also, other reading materials--such as SRA reading kits--are used for follow-up. Sometimes workbooks and other reading materials don't include enough help on specific reading skills that a particular group of readers needs. Thus, classroom teachers often have to design their own follow-up activities to give additional help on specific reading skills to fit the needs of particular pupils. The purpose of the follow-up part of the reading lesson is to reinforce and extend reading skills introduced or covered during previous parts of the reading lesson.

The follow-up activities should be divided equally into two groups: activities that cover vocabulary skills (including word attack and dictionary skills), and activities that cover comprehension skills (including interpretation, reference, and organization skills).

In summary, a reading lesson includes the following six parts: motivating, getting pupils started, guiding pupils through the reading selection, discussing oral rereading, and skill development through follow-up activities. Every good reading lesson should include all these parts.

## Teaching Basic Reading Skills

The basal reader program is the most frequently used program for teaching reading in the elementary grades. Basal readers differ in their approach,

or method, for teaching reading and they also differ in the things they emphasize. Most teachers use the workbooks that accompany the basal readers, and teachers rely heavily on these workbooks when teaching basic reading skills. Most basal readers do a good job--with middle-class pupils. But they do not do a good job with culturally disadvantaged pupils--most do a very poor job with these pupils for reasons discussed throughout this series. The accompanying workbooks, too, do a poor job of developing and reinforcing basic reading skills. Still, teachers must make the best of these reading materials until publishers bring out readers that are designed for the culturally disadvantaged. In addition, teachers must use methods not included in basal readers and their accompanying workbooks when teaching reading skills. This means that teachers must devise ways of teaching skills to culturally disadvantaged pupils not included in the available materials.

The same thing applies for secondary teachers of culturally disadvantaged pupils. The problem is even more acute at the secondary level, because the readers are much more difficult and they require a mastery of basic reading skills culturally disadvantaged pupils lack because of the cumulative ineffectiveness of reading materials in the elementary school that failed to provide a strong foundation. Also, less time is spent at the secondary level on developing basic reading skills. This is ironic, because these basic skills are really necessary if pupils are going to read the more difficult materials at the secondary level. Of course, teachers can always give the pupils the easier elementary reading materials--but easier materials are usually inappropriate for sophisticated secondary pupils. Thus, secondary teachers, too, need to devise ways of teaching basic reading skills.

Some suggestions for teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils are listed below. These suggestions can be adapted to a particular grade level and they can be included in those parts of the reading lesson where they are appropriate.

Most culturally disadvantaged pupils need to increase their sight vocabulary (sight vocabulary, of course, is dependent on the pupils' speaking vocabulary--thus, the importance of language and its interrelations with reading is pointed out again). The sight vocabulary of younger pupils can be increased by putting large, clearly printed labels on objects in the classroom. The sight vocabulary of all pupils can be increased by giving them familiar words that belong to a particular category. Words that pertain to a particular sport can be listed on the chalkboard on Monday, and the pupils can copy these words and keep them as the words to work on for the week. Words included should be suggested by the pupils--in this way, the teacher can be sure that the words will be familiar to them. For example, the teacher can write the word baseball on the chalkboard (or any other word that labels a particular area of interest). After writing baseball, the teacher can ask pupils to suggest words that can be included in the category baseball. Such words as bat, ball, glove, base, player, walk, hit, foul, strike, mound, etc., can be included. After the words are suggested and included on the chalkboard, the teacher can conduct a short discussion on baseball and point to words on the chalkboard as they come up in the discussion. Perhaps pupils will have most of the words or even all of the words in their sight vocabulary. If they do--good! The discussion will

be reinforcement. Also, a sight vocabulary is important because it yields recognition of other words in reading materials that include some of the same phonetic elements as the sight words. A word in the sight vocabulary of the pupils can be used to teach the pupils a whole word family.

Making word families from one word in the sight vocabulary can be the activity for Tuesday. For example, the word mound can yield a big family of related words. Once the pupils understand the base word, substituting initial consonants gives bound, found, hound, pound, round, sound, and wound. Even ounds can become a part of the pupils' sight vocabulary once the simple method of initial consonant substitution is pointed out to the pupils. Other word families can be propagated by words in the baseball category. The consonant blend str in the parent word strike can be used to give birth to a large family of words that begin with the consonant blend str.

On the third day, words in the category can be used to write a composition--in this case, a composition about baseball. And after pupils write the compositions, they should be encouraged to read them. They read their own writing better than the writing of others, and this gives them an increased measure of success.

A sight vocabulary can also be increased by showing pupils an interesting picture and having them describe the picture. The key words can be printed on the chalkboard, and they can be used in the same way the "baseball words" are used. As the pupils describe the pictures, they can try out the standard English patterns they are working on in language.

A sight vocabulary is a good starting place to teach word attack skills (phonetic and structural analysis). Phonetic word attack skills can be taught in the manner described above or they can be taught during the vocabulary or follow-up parts of the reading lesson. When teaching phonetic word attack skills to culturally disadvantaged pupils, special attention must be given to those sounds not in the pupils' language system. For example, if the pupils substitute a /d/ sound for the sound represented by the letters th in writing, then this sound should be given special attention during the period when phonetic word attack skills are covered. Also, this sound should be given the kind of emphasis described in Unit Seven during the language period. Pupils must hear a sound before they can learn to read words that contain the sound. In other words, pupils must hear a sound before they can develop word attack skills.

The phonetic elements teachers should emphasize in reading are:

Sounds of initial consonants

Sounds of final consonants

Long and short vowel sounds

Consonant blends (br, cr, fr, gr, pr, tr, bl, cl, fl, gl, pl, sl, sp, sc, sk, st, scr, spl, sn, sm)

Consonant digraphs (ch, th, sh, wh, cr, wr)

Phonograms (ain, an, and, ake, at, ar, ack, all, ark, ay, ell, eat, et, ot, oat, ight, ing, ill)

Diphthongs (oi, oy, ow, ou)

Structural clues as an aid to reading should also be covered during the introduction of vocabulary or follow-up parts of the reading lesson. Culturally disadvantaged pupils must be taught the meaning of the most common prefixes and suffixes. For example, culturally disadvantaged pupils often use a word that has the same meaning as a prefix or suffix instead of the prefix or suffix. Teachers often assume that the most common prefixes and suffixes are a part of these pupils' speaking vocabulary. Reading materials, too, often reflect this assumption. This is not the case, however. Thus, the meaning of prefixes and suffixes must be taught.

Culturally disadvantaged pupils should be taught common prefixes and suffixes inductively rather than deductively (phonics should also be taught inductively). That is, these pupils should not be given the meaning of the prefixes and suffixes first. Instead, use base words that are in the pupils' speaking vocabulary and ask them to use the words in sentences that express a meaning which could be expressed by a prefix or suffix attached to a key word in the sentence. Of course, the teacher has to structure this request (for the pupils to use base words in a sentence) in such a way as to equate the meaning of the sentence with a particular prefix or suffix. For example, pupils can be asked to use happy in a sentence to show that someone is not happy. If the sentence offered is "He ain't happy," use it to show that the word "ain't" can be replaced by the prefix -un--"He is unhappy." Or, pupils can be asked to use the word "power" in a sentence to express the lack of it. To teach the suffix -less, for example, show the pupils that "The people don't have no power" can be translated as "The people are powerless." Many examples like the above should be given to illustrate the function of prefixes and suffixes. Pupils can reach this generalization if they are shown many examples of words used in sentences contrasted with sentences containing these words with a prefix or suffix added.

Phonetic and structural word attack skills should always be taught by examples rather than rules. Too often, rules are abstract and disadvantaged pupils don't respond to abstract presentations. Also, teaching word attack skills by presenting rules first is a deductive way of teaching and this is contrary to the learning style of disadvantaged pupils. Finally, in teaching the meaning of prefixes and suffixes disadvantaged pupils should be permitted to contrast the meanings of prefixes and suffixes with their nonstandard ways of expressing the same meaning. This kind of contrast is the only sure way of getting across the meaning.

Inflectional endings must also be taught to culturally disadvantaged pupils. Again, they should first hear an ending sound before they are required to read it. For example, many culturally disadvantaged pupils don't pronounce the preterit ending represented by the letters -ed in writing. When teaching this ending in reading, the pupils must first hear the preterit ending sound--then they can learn to read it. The same is true for other inflectional endings. Also, the pupils must contrast the way they express

meaning with the meanings of words that are inflected. For example, they must know that "them apple" equals "those apples" or "the apples" and that the letter -s in writing means more than one.

Dividing words into syllables is another structural word attack skill that must be taught. Pupils must know what a syllable is and be able to sound out syllables if they are to read. But teaching syllabication, especially to culturally disadvantaged pupils, is difficult because their nonstandard language systems often have different numbers of syllables than standard English for some words, or the syllables of many words in their nonstandard language systems begin and/or end with sounds that are different from the beginning and/or ending sounds of syllables in words in standard English. Yet, these students have to know how to divide words into syllables if they are to be effective readers, and these syllables are those of standard English even though they may be imperfectly represented by our graphic system. The imperfect graphic representation makes the problem of teaching reading--particularly phonics and syllabication--extremely difficult. The negative relationship between nonstandard English and the ability to read is crucial--and this relationship must be emphasized repeatedly.

Defining a syllable is difficult. Linguists have not yet formulated a definition that they all can accept; consequently, there are a number of definitions. Any one of these definitions is too difficult for disadvantaged pupils. Yet the term has to be defined and, for these pupils, it should be defined by example. One way of teaching disadvantaged pupils syllabication is to start with their names. Have the pupils say their names and note how many times their mouths, tongues, or lips move to form their names. The number of times their mouths, tongues, or lips move to begin sounds in a name indicates the number of syllables in a name. Point out to the pupils that if the mouth, tongue, or lips move at the end of a sound or at the end of a name--for example, for consonant stops--this does not make a syllable because it ends a sound, it does not begin a sound. Pupils should be taught to hear the number of syllables in words before they determine syllables through reading words. After pupils can detect the number of syllables in a word through hearing the word, they can be taught how to determine the number of syllables in a word through visual clues. Visual clues to the number of syllables is closely connected to phonetic and structural elements in the word and syllabication should be taught as an integral part of phonetic and structural word attack skills, not separately. Most of the basal reader programs and other reading materials include many activities to teach syllabication. In teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils to read, more preparation--compensatory education--must be given to them before they can do the activities for teaching syllabication listed in reading materials.

Context clues is a third reading skill that must be taught culturally disadvantaged pupils. A simple way to get pupils to understand what is meant by getting meaning from context clues is to have the pupils supply a known word that is missing from a sentence. For example, pupils can be given the sentence "He opened the door, sat behind the wheel, and drove the ____ away." Pupils can see that the words "car" or "automobile" fit in the blank space, and they can give reasons to explain how they know which word fits in the blank space. They can realize that the other words in the sentence and

the thought expressed by the sentence give clues for the word that fits. Next, pupils can be given sentences containing one unknown word that is underlined. For example, "He opened the door, sat behind the wheel, and drove the vehicle away." Assuming that the pupils know all the other words in the sentence, they will know that vehicle is the word for something that can be driven and ridden in, even if they can't sound out the word by using phonetic clues.

The reason culturally disadvantaged pupils have such trouble with context clues is that they can't read enough words in sentences to give them the overall meaning of the sentence, or the unknown word symbolizes a concept they don't know. Often, even though they can determine the meaning of a word in context, they still can't sound it out because they lack phonetic and structure word attack skills. This lack is often due to interferences from their nonstandard language systems.

Pupils can be shown that the types of expression help determine the meaning of a word. For example, some sentences give definitions: "The filament is the thin wire inside a light bulb that glows and gives off light." Even if the pupils don't know the word filament, the type of sentence (definition) gives them a context clue. Some sentences restate the meaning of a word: "The chassis, or the bottom part of the frame of an automobile, is made of steel." Another type of sentence that gives context clues is the sentence containing typographical aids such as quotation marks, italics, boldface type, and parentheses. For example, these marks sometimes set off meaning clues for an unknown word in the sentence: "Fires are fed by combustible materials (paper, rags, woods, gasoline, etc.)." Pupils can be shown that the words in parentheses stand for "combustible materials." Still another type of sentence that gives context clues is a sentence that compares or contrasts. Sometimes the meaning of an unknown word can be determined if a similar or opposite idea is included in the sentence or another sentence close by. Often, signal words such as while, other, but, etc., provide a clue to this type of sentence. For example: "Playing is always enjoyable, but work can be drudgery."

Culturally disadvantaged pupils must be given many drill exercises that include these types of sentences. Further, these pupils should be told why they are given drill exercises. They should be aware that the drill exercises are on particular types of sentences which give clues for unknown words.

The ability to put things or ideas into categories is a prerequisite for understanding the main idea in a paragraph that is read, and this skill should be emphasized in the reading readiness and reading programs in the primary grades. When developing this skill, teachers must first present concrete objects to categorize. The program in the primary grades generally does a good job in teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils how to categorize concrete objects. The instructional movement in developing this skill must be from concrete objects to abstract ideas. There is, however, a transition period in developing the skill of categorizing and this period is crucial in teaching the skill of categorizing to culturally disadvantaged pupils. An activity that can be used at this middle level is to show a picture that portrays action or something that is of interest to disadvantaged

pupils. Have the pupils look at a picture and suggest a title for it. They can give a title to the picture after they list all the important details in the picture. The teacher should write these details on the chalkboard as the pupils suggest them (this will help increase speaking and sight vocabulary). After the details are listed, the class can go over them to determine which details are important in giving a title to the picture and which are unimportant. When the important details of the picture are determined, the pupils can give a title to the picture. The title should express the main idea of the picture. This is the type of activity that can be given to culturally disadvantaged pupils during the transition stage of developing skills of categorizing.

A similar activity that is less concrete is to read a short story or poem to the pupils that they can understand. After reading the story or poem, have the pupils suggest the details or important events that can contribute to the title. After a discussion on which details or events are important, the pupils can give the story or poem a title.

Later, pupils can be given lists of words or sentences to be categorized. After they can do this, have them write newspaper headlines that express the overall idea of a news story. For example, have pupils read a short news story (or read the short news story to them). After the story is read, have them write a headline for it, then compare this headline with the original one. To help pupils write the headline, have them list details under the headings <u>who</u>, <u>what</u>, <u>where</u>, <u>when</u>, <u>why</u>, and <u>how</u> (these headings can also be used with pictures, stories, and poems). The types of activities suggested here will help pupils understand what is meant by the main idea of a story or paragraph.

When pupils can determine the main idea of a paragraph they read themselves, they can be shown that the main ideas of each paragraph make up the overall meaning of the story or selection read.

Teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils the main idea, of course, is not easy. They are handicapped so severely by their cultural backgrounds that they don't learn related and necessary reading skills for finding the main idea (word attack skills, context skills, impoverished conceptual development, etc.).

Culturally disadvantaged pupils must be taught to follow both written and oral directions. Teaching these pupils to follow written directions should be an integral part of the reading program. The following steps in reading direction should be taught to the pupils.

1. Read the directions all the way through to get a general idea of what is to be done.

2. Read the directions a second time to understand all of the steps.

3. Try to get a mental picture of each step in the directions and the reason for each step.

The follow-up part of the reading lesson is a good time to develop the skill of reading directions. For example, pupils can be given simple

directions to turn to a particular page, look at the picture, count the number of people in the picture and write the number down. The directions given during the follow-up period can be made increasingly difficult as the pupils' skill in reading directions increases. The practice in following written directions might be correlated with phonetic and structural word attack skills. For example, pupils can be given written directions to locate a particular word by phonetic or structural clues. Mature pupils can be given the directions to follow that are on medicine bottles, for examples. This kind of activity gives the pupils practical help in reading directions, and it also emphasizes the importance of reading directions accurately. The importance of following directions accurately can also be emphasized during a discussion on the effects of <u>not</u> reading directions accurately or following them as they are written.

When the pupils are given drills or activities to develop their skill to understand written directions, the steps in following directions should always be in focus. Closely related to the ability to read and follow directions is the ability to take tests. Often, culturally disadvantaged pupils are doubly penalized when they take examinations because of their limiting cultural backgrounds and their inability to follow directions. Thus, these pupils should be taught how to take tests; and this, too, should be an integral part of the reading program, specifically that part of the reading program which deals with following directions. Culturally disadvantaged pupils should understand the following points on taking tests.

1. Be prepared.
2. Read all directions carefully and understand them before executing them. Questions should be asked if the directions are not understood.
3. All test items should be read carefully.
4. Ask questions about unknown words.

Perhaps if pupils can be taught how to take tests their scores will increase, even if they lack the kind of motivation for taking tests that most middle-class pupils have. Knowing how to take tests can offset some of the negative effects of lacking motivation for taking tests.

Culturally disadvantaged pupils tend to interpret written sentences literally, and this can affect their comprehension in reading. These pupils often fail to understand that metaphorical and exaggerated statements, for example, are used to emphasize a quality and not convey fact. Culturally disadvantaged pupils should be given drills consisting of exaggerated statements that are made to express a quality. Pupils can be given such sentences as: "She wore a dress that was a block long" or "He could hit as hard as a jackhammer" or "They gave a cheer like thunder" or "He was a tiger on the prowl when tracking the criminal." After the pupils read the sentence, they can discuss the quality that the sentence means to emphasize through metaphor or exaggeration. These pupils have difficulty understanding figurative speech <u>expressed in standard English</u>. Also, these pupils

have difficulty understanding figurative language that depends on a different experiential background for understanding. This does not mean that they have difficulty understanding figurative speech as a poetic device--their rich use and understanding of slang shows that they do understand and use the poetic device of figurative speech, including metaphoric and exaggerated statements. The kind of figurative language they encounter in readers, however, does not fit their linguistical or conceptual backgrounds. This also makes it difficult for them to get meaning by inference and they often have trouble determining the direction of a story, anticipating action of a story, understanding the motivation of characters in the story, and getting full meaning from a story. Thus, clues in a story that help the reader draw inferences must be pointed out and discussed to help disadvantaged readers understand the process of deriving meaning through inference.

Another handicap related to their inability to understand figurative speech is their inability to separate fact from opinion. During reading and discussion periods, point out to the pupils statements in the reader that are supported with facts and statements that are not supported with facts. During the follow-up period, pupils can be given sentences like the following to label fact or opinion: "That is the ugliest picture in the world"; "The picture is hanging on the south wall"; "The baseball team won three games last year"; "The baseball team will win more games and the championship next year."

It is extremely important that culturally disadvantaged pupils be able to separate fact from opinion and understand the techniques of propaganda. First of all, culturally disadvantaged people suffer because of the negative opinions others have of them, and if they can recognize the cause of their suffering they will be in a better position to counteract it. Also, in recognizing opinion from fact, disadvantaged pupils won't have to feel that the negative opinions expressed by others mirrors reality. Secondly, propaganda techniques, especially in advertising, are used to exploit them. Pupils should be taught that propaganda gives only one point of view; it is heavily opinionated and it lacks supporting facts; propaganda attempts to influence people in only one direction. A good exercise to understand propaganda techniques that can be given to mature culturally disadvantaged pupils is to have them examine advertisements and list all facts in one column. This short exercise illustrates the techniques of propaganda through familiar material.

* * *

The discussion in Part II has been concerned with some of the significant concepts and skills in reading that must be taught to culturally disadvantaged pupils. Some suggestions on types of techniques that can be used for teaching these concepts and skills were discussed also. The techniques suggested here do not fit into any particular method for teaching reading. It was stated above, and it is stated here again for emphasis, that children will learn to read in spite of the method for teaching reading--if they have the appropriate conceptual and linguistical background necessary for learning to read. Thus, readiness is the crucial area in teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils to read.

The same causes of deprivation, however, are the same causes of the lack of reading readiness in culturally disadvantaged pupils. In Unit One it was pointed out that the school cannot remove or affect many of these causes of deprivation; therefore, the school can't properly get culturally disadvantaged pupils ready to read. The problem, then, is to teach them to read in spite of their lack of expected readiness. Stated another way, the problem of the school is to use the backgrounds of these pupils as a foundation for teaching them to read. In other words, cultural deprivation is their reading readiness. Instead of making the child fit the curriculum, make the curriculum fit the child.

The discussion above on teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged pupils is based on the assumption that the curriculum won't change--partly because of its tendency for fossilization and partly because so little is known about building a reading program on the experiential foundation of disadvantaged pupils.

If a reading program is to be based on the above rationale, new methods and new materials for teaching reading must be developed. These methods and materials must be consistent with the background and learning style of culturally disadvantaged pupils. This is an important job for research. Unfortunately, not very much about this problem has been discovered as yet. The problem for teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged pupils really boils down to these two choices: either the school gives these pupils the kind of readiness for reading that middle-class children get automatically; or the school uses new methods and materials for teaching reading suited to disadvantaged pupils--their experience of deprivation is their readiness. The school has traditionally made the former choice in designing programs for teaching reading to disadvantaged pupils (headstart and other compensatory education programs are products of this choice). The limitations of the school in "making up" for deprivation, however, seems to indicate that the latter choice might be more effective in teaching disadvantaged pupils to read. Few programs are based on this choice, possibly because of the lack of research findings in this area.

In traditionally making the first choice for teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged pupils (giving them compensatory programs to make them ready for reading in the expected ways), the school has taken on a monumental job. Also, this choice has been responsible for viewing culturally disadvantaged pupils as slow learners rather than, perhaps, as different learners. Consequently, many reading programs for culturally disadvantaged pupils are identical to reading programs for slow learners--a state of confusion previously pointed out. The structure of these programs has resulted in reading materials for slow learners and culturally disadvantaged learners being identical.

More and more reading materials are being published that seem more appropriate for disadvantaged pupils, especially books that have characters and settings with whom culturally disadvantaged pupils can identify. Some of these reading materials are good--especially the "trade books." Some of the textbooks are not so good, and they duplicate the ineffectiveness of traditional materials and they may be even more ineffective.

Some trade books especially appropriate for culturally disadvantaged pupils portray minority group characters in situations that are interesting to disadvantaged pupils--particularly those disadvantaged pupils who have the same ethnic identity as the main character. But not all books with minority characters are good. For example, many of the books with Negro characters being published illustrate a common flaw found in some of these books.

Many educators and publishers assume that if reading textbooks include stories about Negroes or have Negro characters in stories, Negro pupils will be motivated to read (the assumption is made about pupils who are members of other minority groups). This is a reasonable assumption. Motivation to read is a prerequisite for learning to read, and these pupils are more likely motivated if they can identify with characters in the story.

Many of the books and stories about Negro characters are not good because the characters are unrealistically portrayed. The characters are the same old white middle-class characters painted brown and "sporting" new names. They are unlike any real Negroes--or any real people, since the white characters that are hidden behind the brown faces are unlike real people.

Many of these stories with Negro characters have the same worn-out plot: some "nice" Negro is fighting for acceptance and he finally makes it because of some special skill he has (if he is a boy, he can run or excel in some other athletic skill--girls are usually singers). This kind of story is mildly offensive to many Negroes--or it should be--because this is often the only way Negroes could be accepted. What Negroes want is acceptance as individuals, not acceptance because of a particular rare skill or quality that only a few can possess. How silly many of these stories are! And how unrealistic! Most urban Negroes living in ghettos don't even come into contact with Caucasians socially. In large cities, most disadvantaged Negroes attend schools that are predominantly Negro. How strange it must be for these Negro pupils to read about one Negro in an all white school battling with his special skill for acceptance. Stories about Negroes should be realistic and fresh and dramatize conflicts other than acceptance.

Also, stories about Negroes should have some "soul" (<u>soul</u> in Negro slang means "that which can be exclusively identified with the Negro subculture"). In other words, the interests, actions, responses, etc., of the character should be those of Negroes who are products of the Negro subculture, not "brown white folks" who are products of the dominant culture.

Of course, if stories are to reflect the cultural identity of Negroes, this will require publishers and school districts to admit that our society is a segregated society, and that segregation has been a cause for the development of a unique Negro subculture. Publishers and school district officials are reluctant to reflect this reality or their recognition of this reality in textbooks. Instead, Negro characters are usually portrayed as having only one insignificant difference: the color of their skin and the problems of being accepted because of their skin color.

Our past failure in teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged Negro pupils and other culturally disadvantaged pupils indicates that our methods

and materials are unappropriate and ineffective. The first step to bring about improving the reading skills of disadvantaged pupils is being taken--changing reading materials. But if the stories in the new books are not realistic, if they are not believable--in other words, if they are not good--the step will be taken without causing any effect on reading achievement. Further, if the step is not taken for finding new methods to teach culturally disadvantaged pupils to read that is based on a rationale consistent with their cultural backgrounds, many of these pupils will probably continue to do poorly in reading. In fact, this step needs to be taken first, and new materials should be developed on the basis of what this step discovers.

## PART III: TEACHING WRITING TO CULTURALLY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

### The Writing Program for Culturally Disadvantaged Pupils

The purpose of the writing program is to teach pupils how to: (1) organize ideas, and (2) write them down so others can understand them. Writing programs for culturally disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are not disadvantaged have this same purpose. In addition, the skills of writing to be taught in a writing program are the same for all pupils. The difference between the writing program for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is in the ideas to be organized (specifically, the "stuff" out of which ideas are formed: experiences), and the specialized instruction disadvantaged pupils require in language (specifically, instruction in standard English because their nonstandard language patterns are reflected in their writing).

The purpose of the writing program, as stated in the foregoing paragraph, implies a two-part definition of writing. First, writing is the organization of ideas; secondly, writing is ideas that are symbolically communicated (written ideas) in language that other people can understand. In other words, writing is communicating ideas through written words. Furthermore, the definition implies two roles in the communication process of writing: the role of organizer and recorder of ideas (the writer), and the role of the receiver of the ideas (the reader).

Teachers generally spend much more time teaching the second phase of writing--that is, writing in language that other people (the reader) can understand. The proverbial red pencil derives its notoriety from the disproportionate amount of time teachers spend on scratching corrections on pupils' papers to make the papers readable--which means, translating the pupils' language into standard English. These red marks should really be warning signs that tell the teacher to spend less time on scratching translations and spend more time on teaching the pupils language. This problem is not unique to culturally disadvantaged pupils--all pupils make the kinds of mistakes in writing that cause difficulty for the reader. But culturally disadvantaged pupils make the same kinds of writing mistakes as other pupils in addition to the mistakes caused by interference from their nonstandard language system (the phenomenon of interference was described in Unit Seven).

Now, this criticism doesn't mean that teachers should stop correcting the writing of culturally disadvantaged pupils. Their need to write standard English is almost as great as their need to speak standard English. Writing is a communication process that involves two roles--the organizer and the reader--and if the ideas are not expressed in a <u>standard</u> way the reader won't be able to understand them. What this criticism does mean is that more emphasis should be placed on teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils language,

and that the corrections in their writing should be correlated with the language program. That is, the corrections should be diagnostic (point out those items that require special emphasis in the language program); corrections should be focused on the particular interference from the pupils' nonstandard language system (in a sentence like "Them boy play in the street" a red line should not be drawn through "them" and a red "s" should not be added to "boy" unless it is pointed out to the writer that the word them is not a plural marker and that in writing the way to show more than one is to add the letter s to the word boy); finally, correlating the writing program with the language program means that the corrections teachers make on pupils' writing should be those items covered in the language program. Or the items covered in the language program can be corrected with a different color pencil. There are two advantages, however, in correcting only one item in each written assignment: first, teacher and pupils can concentrate on the one item and this concentration gives more reinforcement for establishing the desired pattern in writing; second, the pupils' papers will not be all marked up with corrections. It may be that there is an inverse relationship between the number of red marks on a paper and the motivation of pupils to keep trying to write: as red marks increase, motivation to try decreases. Thus, teachers should make corrections more meaningful. In addition, written corrections should receive more emphasis as grade level increases. In the lower grades, the main emphasis should be on getting the pupils to put their ideas down in writing. This should be the main emphasis in the upper grades, also, but at these levels writing standard English patterns should receive a secondary emphasis.

But teaching pupils to write standard English patterns is only one phase of the writing program. The other phase, teaching pupils to organize their ideas for writing, is more difficult to teach. Yet, this is the more important phase of the writing program because pupils must have ideas to organize before writing is done.

One cause of difficulty in the first phase (organizing ideas for writing) of writing programs for disadvantaged pupils is that many pupils have not had rich experiences that generate ideas to be organized and written down. Or the experiences have not been interpreted to them in a meaningful way. Another difficulty is that teachers and the textbooks used for writing instruction give disadvantaged pupils topics to write about that have no relation to their experiential background. Culturally disadvantaged pupils need to have the kinds of rich experiences that generate ideas for writing (this need for having rich experiences has been stressed throughout this series because rich experiences are the foundation for all learning, including learning to write). If the pupils have not had experiences, they have few ideas: and if they have few ideas, they have little to say and little to write about.

But disadvantaged pupils do have experiences, and the problem of using their experiences will be discussed. First, the need to provide rich experiences as they relate to writing must be discussed further. The word "rich" was used to modify the word "experiences." What is meant by the word "rich" as it relates to writing is an experience that excites and motivates pupils to think about the experience and discuss the experience with the

teacher and other pupils. During the discussion of an experience that the pupils have shared, each individual contributes an idea or ideas that trigger additional ideas in others. Thus, discussion that follows a shared experience generates more ideas than were generated by the experience alone. This is one reason that it is important to precede a writing assignment with a short intense discussion (the discussion should not be so long as to reveal all the ideas). A more basic reason is that culturally disadvantaged pupils constantly need new experiences that can be a foundation for all school learning. Generally, the primary grades do a better job of providing the kinds of experiences for disadvantaged pupils that generate thought, discussion and ideas for writing. One reason for this is that it is easier to provide experiences that fit the interests and needs of young disadvantaged children. The interest-need spectrum of young children is narrow, and the school can provide experiences that cover this spectrum. Another reason is that so much is new to young children that the novelty of an experience is interesting. At the upper grades, the curriculum of the school is not designed to cover the interest-need spectrum of older disadvantaged pupils. Thus, activities that are supposed to give experiences to these older pupils so that they will have ideas to write about are ineffective because they don't fit the interests and needs of older disadvantaged pupils. Thus, the writing curriculum, too, must be changed to fit these pupils.

All disadvantaged pupils--primary, upper grade, and secondary pupils--have had out-of-school experiences and these, too, can be used as a resource of ideas to be organized for writing. The problem is that disadvantaged pupils often have experiences in an intellectual vacuum. That is, the experiences are not interpreted by a mediator--someone who interprets and explains the experience meaningfully so that the pupil formulates ideas and relates these ideas to others. Thus, it is important to give these pupils in-school experiences, regardless of grade level, that provide a professional mediator--the classroom teacher. Another problem in using out-of-school experiences of disadvantaged pupils as a resource of ideas to organize for writing is that the curriculum is not geared to their ideas. In the foregoing paragraph, it was suggested that the curriculum be changed so that activities to give experiences to generate ideas fit disadvantaged pupils' interests and needs. Here, the curriculum change pertains to a change in expectations to fit the ideas disadvantaged pupils come to school with.

The problem of curriculum expectations not fitting the ideas (experiential background) of disadvantaged pupils is best illustrated by examining the kinds of topics some teachers and most textbooks give as writing assignments. Such topics as "Winter in the Woods," "A Visit to the Antique Shop," "My Favorite Pet," and the topic found in many textbooks (or similar topics), "My Summer Vacation Trip" are examples of topics that are obviously inappropriate for disadvantaged pupils. An understanding of culturally disadvantaged pupils will help teachers assign writing topics that are consistent with the pupils' ideas that they have formulated from their experiential backgrounds.

In summary, the writing program is in two parts: teaching pupils how to organize their ideas for writing, and teaching pupils how to express their ideas in writing so that other people understand them. The writing program for disadvantaged pupils must give them experiences that fit their needs and

interests so that they can formulate ideas to write about; also, they should be given an opportunity to write about the ideas they already have. After they put their ideas into writing, the teachers corrections should correlate with language instruction.

## Teaching Basic Writing Skills

Most language textbooks do a poor job in organizing writing programs. Teachers of disadvantaged pupils can use these textbooks, however, as aids in teaching writing. Textbooks, however, should not take the place of the teacher--textbooks are aids. This point is emphasized, here, because most textbooks of writing are poor and teachers of culturally disadvantaged pupils must do some good teaching of writing skills before disadvantaged pupils can use textbooks. In fact, most teachers who like to teach writing use textbooks very little in their teaching. Instead, these teachers use their own materials and their own techniques for teaching pupils writing. This is especially true of good teachers of writing who teach disadvantaged pupils--these teachers not only use their own materials and techniques, but they adapt textbook materials to fit the learning style of disadvantaged pupils.

Some of the techniques for teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils are listed below. These techniques can be adapted for particular grade levels.

The writing program begins in the primary grades, before pupils are able to write even one sentence by themselves. The experience chart is more than a reading aid; it is one of the best means that teachers have for teaching good organization in writing. The experience chart technique can also be used in the upper grades, including the high school grades. Formulating and writing a few sentences through class participation or formulating and writing an entire paragraph or composition through class participation is a good exercise for teaching writing skills, especially organizational skills.

When primary pupils graduate from experience charts to writing their own sentences, teachers should concentrate on what the pupils write, not on how they write it. The main purpose of the writing program in the primary grades should be to get the pupils to express their ideas in writing. This should be the main purpose of the writing program in the upper grades, too. In other words, teachers should not emphasize standard grammar, correct spelling and punctuation, or even neatness. Encouraging pupils in writing down their own ideas in their own language in a logical sequence should come first. Teachers should help the pupils develop pride in their ideas that are expressed in their own words. It is doubtful if they can develop pride in their writing if their papers are returned to them with many red correction marks.

The concept of a paragraph should be introduced in the middle grades. Pupils must be taught that a paragraph is a group of sentences that develop

one idea. This concept can be taught along with the reading skill of finding the main idea in a paragraph read. Give pupils practice in writing a sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph. After they can do this, they can understand that a topic sentence functions in the same way—that is, it states the main idea in a paragraph. The topic sentence is the sentence that states the idea that is supported or developed by the other sentences in the paragraph.

Pupils should be moved from writing a sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph read to writing their own topic sentences soon after they understand the concept that paragraphs have a main idea. An inductive way of teaching disadvantaged pupils how to write a topic sentence is to have them write three sentences about something specific. For example, have the pupils write three sentences about what they saw on the way to school or have them write three sentences about their favorite television character or even the costume the character might wear. After the pupils write the three sentences, have individuals read their three sentences. After each reading, have the class formulate one sentence that summarizes the three sentences or tells what the three sentences are about. This sentence can be the topic sentence for a four sentence paragraph.

Pupils should also be given exercises that require them to write three or four sentences supporting a topic sentence that they have been given. This exercise, and the one described in the foregoing paragraph should be repeated over and over before disadvantaged pupils are given an assignment of writing a complete paragraph. The teacher will have to write the topic sentence for some pupils long after other pupils have learned to write it themselves.

Pupils should be taught to plan paragraphs before they write. A good simple method of planning paragraphs is to encourage pupils to think about what they want to express--the main ideas they want to develop. This is the topic sentence, and it should be written exactly as it will appear in the paragraph. This means that they should revise the topic sentence, if necessary, before writing the supporting sentences. After the topic sentence is written, four details that support the topic sentence should be written. These details do not have to be expressed in sentences. The outline for a paragraph is as follows:

Topic sentence.

1.
2.
3.
4.
} Supporting details

An example of a paragraph outline about Manbat's costume might be as follows:

Manbat dresses funny.

1. Mask
2. Cape
3. Green long underwear
4. Big belt

When disadvantaged pupils first begin to plan their paragraphs, the teacher should give them as much individual help as possible. A way to help all the pupils at once is to make planning a paragraph an activity that involves the entire class. Write the topic sentence and the supporting points on the chalkboard; then, have the pupils write the paragraph from the outline on the chalkboard. Cooperatively formulating a paragraph plan is a desirable intermediate step in teaching disadvantaged pupils to formulate a paragraph plan individually. Pupils should always plan a paragraph before writing it.

It should be noted that the method of planning and then writing a paragraph described is a deductive method. If disadvantaged pupils have difficulty learning to plan a paragraph by this method, reverse the procedure and teach them to plan a paragraph inductively. This is easily accomplished by having the pupils write the supporting points first, then the topic sentence.

Teaching disadvantaged pupils to write a good paragraph should be the primary writing objective of the intermediate grades of elementary school. Of course, if those pupils who are ready can be taught to write a three paragraph composition, do it. Writing a three paragraph composition, however, should be the primary purpose of the upper grades of elementary school and the early grades of junior high school. The ability to plan and write a good paragraph is a necessary foundation for learning to write a three paragraph composition. The same method for planning one paragraph can be used for planning the three paragraphs of a composition. A title for the composition can be inductively formulated by expressing the main idea of the three topic sentences.

By the time pupils reach the end of junior high school, and certainly when they enter senior high school, pupils can be taught that the topic sentence of a paragraph suggests a particular method that can be used to develop the main idea of the paragraph. For example, the topic sentence "Manbat wears funny clothes" suggests that details should be used to develop the idea expressed in the topic sentence. The topic sentence "I don't like Manbat" suggests that reasons should be listed to develop the main idea. A topic sentence that suggests examples should be listed to develop the main idea is "Manbat helps the police of Getem City." Finally, the topic sentence "Manbat and Mighty Man are something alike" suggests that similarities and differences should be listed to develop the main idea. Other methods for developing a paragraph that can be taught are contrasts and comparisons, steps in a process, and cause and effect.

Each method should be taught individually. Again, it is recommended that each method be taught by involving the entire class. That is, write topic sentences on the chalkboard and have pupils develop the paragraph cooperatively with the method being taught. After pupils learn the methods for developing paragraphs the method should be listed in the paragraph outline.

A brief description of a writing program was discussed here. Teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils how to write is not as easy, as cut and dried, as it was described here. The discussion, however, does present a

sequence and a brief general description of a writing program for culturally disadvantaged pupils.

Teaching culturally disadvantaged pupils to write is extremely difficult: teaching any kinds of pupils to write is difficult. Writing is definitely the most difficult skill to teach of the three language arts skills: speaking, reading, and writing. The three skills are listed in this order not by accident. They are listed in the order of the degree of advancement pupils must progress before beginning a subsequent skill. In other words, pupils should not begin to learn how to read until they have acquired some facility to speak, and they should not begin learning how to write until they have developed some ability to read. Culturally disadvantaged pupils are taught these three skills before they are ready, often by methods and materials that are not appropriate to their backgrounds.

The importance of culturally disadvantaged pupils to learn the language arts cannot be overemphasized. The language arts are the primary tools for academic success, and academic success can be the master tool culturally disadvantaged pupils use to fashion a better life. The fundamental purpose of the schools in educating the culturally disadvantaged is to help them acquire the master tool.

## SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS

1. There is no <u>one</u> method for teaching reading to culturally disadvantaged pupils.

2. The main cause of poor reading ability of culturally disadvantaged pupils is that their cultural backgrounds have not adequately prepared them--made them ready--for reading instruction in the middle-class oriented curriculum.

3. <u>Reading</u> can be defined as ". . . the symbolic use of language where one obtains meaning from printed symbols."

4. Pupils should be able to hear the <u>sound</u> of the language and <u>speak</u> the language before they are taught to <u>read</u> the language.

5. Remedial reading programs generally give poor results because reading instruction is not coordinated with remedial instruction in language and efforts to provide disadvantaged pupils with experiences necessary for learning how to read.

6. More research is needed to determine how a disadvantaged background can be utilized as the basis for an effective reading program.

7. The reading lesson can roughly be divided into six parts: (1) motivation, (2) vocabulary, (3) guided silent reading, (4) discussion, (5) oral rereading, and (6) follow-up.

8. Writing is the most difficult language arts skill to teach culturally disadvantaged pupils.

9. The order for beginning instruction in the language arts is speaking, reading, and writing.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give other definitions of reading, and relate these definitions to the description or characteristics of culturally disadvantaged pupils to determine the implications for a reading program for culturally disadvantaged pupils.

2. Select a familiar story at a particular grade level and discuss how the story can be related to the experiential background of disadvantaged pupils.

3. Select one nonstandard pronunciation characteristic of disadvantaged pupils in a particular linguistic group and discuss how the nonstandard pronunciation characteristic interferes with teaching phonetic word attack skills.

4. List common reading mistakes made by particular disadvantaged pupils and relate the mistakes to either the experiential or linguistic backgrounds of the pupils.

5. What are other divisions that can be made in the reading lesson for disadvantaged pupils?

6. Compile a bibliography of appropriate books for disadvantaged pupils. What should the criteria be for selecting books for disadvantaged pupils?

7. Discuss ways that the background of disadvantaged pupils might be used positively to teach reading and writing skills.

8. What are some suitable topics that disadvantaged pupils can use in writing assignments?

9. Discuss the following: Should instruction in other subjects be delayed for disadvantaged pupils until they have acquired basic language arts skills?

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## EPILOGUE

To the Readers:

Throughout this series, I have tried to present the problem of educating culturally disadvantaged pupils as I see it. I have tried to be honest and I have tried to show many sides to the many problems that I see. Always, I have tried to refrain from making this serious problem as simple as some others seem to make it. It really "bugs" me to read and hear reports or observations or solutions that make the problem simple.

I don't think we are doing nearly enough in our society to prevent the social disaster that I'm afraid is coming--if we don't start applying all the vast talent and money that we have. The social disaster I'm referring to is another and greater cycle of deprivation that this generation of culturally disadvantaged pupils will spawn unless something is done. And the schools can't do all that needs to be done. In fact, the efforts of the schools will do little to halt the coming disaster unless all the resources of our society--government, business, and all our citizens--begin to do more about alleviating some of the causes of deprivation. This is one of the main points I tried to make throughout this series. I don't like being a prophet of doom . . . I mean, it's not my "bag." But I really don't think we are doing enough to solve the problems of the culturally disadvantaged, and I'm afraid. I hope I'm overstating the case. I hope I'm wrong.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Johnson